

## **RE: CA27 // How Palmdale Tells Us What Happened & What's Next**

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As we look ahead to the 2024 Statewide Primary here in California on March 5th, the clock is ticking. In about 12 months, we will have a nominee to flip from Red-to-Blue my home district, California's 27th. A district where Democrats outnumber Republicans by 55,000 and growing, but are still represented by Congressman Mike Garcia. CA27 is one of five seats Democrats need to take back the Speaker's Gavel.

As we saw in both CA27 and the Valadao seat, heavily Latino Congressional districts see turnout booms and busts between Presidential and Midterm Elections that explain how a District that voted for Joe Biden by 12.4% can end up sending Mike Garcia back to Congress after he sided with Capitol insurrectionists.

Today, I want to shed some light on turnout in Palmdale last November and how, coupled with higher Presidential turnout, a strong grassroots campaign can be the difference in the November 2024 race and why there are reasons for optimism.

The City of Palmdale is the only major jurisdiction in the Antelope Valley that was in both CA25 and CA27, as-is. In 2020, as Campaign Manager, our team's top priority was Antelope Valley turnout. That year, a record 74% - almost 3 in 4 - Palmdale voters cast a ballot and delivered an 11,000 vote surplus for Christy. This was crucial for us to fend off, at that time, ruby red Simi Valley. While we still fell short that year, Palmdale's record turnout put us within striking distance.

In 2022, Palmdale turnout dropped by more than half to below 34% - only 1 in 3 Palmdale voters cast a ballot - the Democratic stronghold of the district delivered

an only 850 vote surplus to the Smith campaign. A 3% win in a city where Democrats hold a 27-point registration advantage.

Diving in a little deeper, turnout in the bluest part of the district, East Palmdale, landed in the mid to low 20% range in some precincts. One of the bluest precincts in the entire district only reached 18% turnout, while Santa Clarita saw some GOP precincts in Saugus with turnout above 60%. The impact of this ultra low turnout meant that the Latino share of the vote in CA27 shrunk from 1 out of 4 in 2020 to just 1 in 5 voters in 2022.

### **So, what the heck happened and where is our anti-MAGA vote?**

For a silver lining, November 2014 turnout in Palmdale was just 27%. That year I worked for 10 months in the Antelope Valley registering and turning out voters. It was my first election cycle working as an organizer, all I heard day in and day out in the final weeks was, “Sorry, I don't vote unless it's for President.” While I can recall stories of my family talking about a Presidential election during dinner and the consequences of Kerry versus Bush, we never spoke about the City Council or our local Member of Congress.

It will take cycle-after-cycle organizing to build both political education and the political power to make those lasting changes. Although we are seeing progress, 2014 to 2022 turnout was an overall improvement but it has to be run in parallel to an equally important task we have to do over the next 21 months, redefining Mike Garcia.

Just 6 years ago we started on a journey that left Steve Knight losing by one of the largest margins of any House Republican in the country. That wasn't by accident, and that wasn't because we had some magical Democratic Nominee that year. I know that because by the time we were done with Steve Knight, he couldn't even beat Mike Garcia for 2nd place in 2020.

To touch on what Brian highlighted earlier, we need to raise the stakes of this election for voters and that starts by connecting Mike Garcia to the failures of Washington to address the most important issues to working families. His veneer of being the homegrown fighter pilot turned leader fighting for “us” in Washington has gone largely unchallenged since 2020, Democrats need to reintroduce Mike as a swampy politician in it for himself, his donors, and his dangerous ideology.

Voters just don't know who he is yet. In 2020 we didn't have a voting record like we do now.

Educating voters on how Mike Garcia is a MAGA extremist who has sold us out by voting against the certification of electoral votes in Pennsylvania and Arizona. Since January 6th, Garcia has emboldened anti-democratic forces, praised QAnon conspiracists, and even called the Capitol Police ‘the Gestapo.’ Opposed the impeachment of President Trump for his role in the insurrection. Opposed legalizing Dreamers and reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. Mike Garcia appears to have even allegedly violated federal laws requiring transparency for lawmakers who own and trade stocks by waiting to report certain trades until after the 2020 election. Baking this information into the electorate is our imperative.

There are activists already working to organize protests, canvasses, and we already have candidates jumping in the field. While local Republicans are actively organizing right-wing groups to push their candidates to voters. We can meet the moment by partnering with local organizations in the Antelope Valley who are already starting the work of educating voters about the importance of voting down ballot, who the real Mike Garcia is, and reminding folks when their ballot will arrive because we know when we make it easier to vote, more people do it.

If last November's Election taught us anything, it is that in these traditionally underinvested predominantly working class Latino and Black communities, we

have to get on the ground and start talking to voters even earlier and make sure voters know the real Mike. We did not wait for the DCCC in 2018 and we sure as hell won't now. By raising the stakes of the election and reminding voters of their role in making a measurable difference to help us win – a winning coalition voters can rise to the occasion.

We have the opportunity to improve the lives of people whose names we will never know - both in the Antelope Valley and everywhere in this country - because Palmdale voters alone could very well decide whether Kevin McCarthy or Hakeem Jeffries will be Speaker of the 118th Congress.

Like in 2018, losing isn't an option.

Let's go make some waves.